

Spring 2010 Newsletter

From your President:

As my year as your president comes to an end, I want to thank all of you who helped me especially the executive director, Dr. Primosch and the immediate past president, Dr. Schneider. This year has been very eventful with the economy and health care reform on everyone's mind.

The Medicaid lawsuit has begun in Miami. There have been two weeks of testimony, by mostly the pediatricians, since the trial began in December. The trial is a bench trial (judge, no jury) and is scheduled by the judge between other cases. The trial will resume for a week at the end of May and is scheduled again for a week in June.

Many times we don't become involved in organizations because no one told us that we were needed. As my year as your president ends, I am asking each and every one of you to become involved in the FAPD and other areas of organized dentistry. In speaking with some dentists, I hear complaints about what organized dentistry is doing or not doing. This is your chance to become part of the decision making process and deciding where dentistry will move to in the future. I am always amazed that at some oral health coalition meetings there are one or two dentists present and at some there is not a single dentist present. There are many opportunities for you to get involved. A few are listed below.

Specialty Forum: A group that meets just before the Florida Dental Association House of Delegates to discuss specialty issues that arise in the state.

The State Oral Health Improvement Plan (SOHIP; now called Oral Health Florida): A statewide coalition for improving oral health that was initially set up by the governor. It has several committees including Child and Maternal health, Fluoridation, Special Needs, and Elder Care. These committees meet once every month or two at lunchtime via conference call and one face to face meeting each year.

Locally you can ask your dental association or head start program about meeting times and dates of local meetings that are occurring.

In times where we are looking for areas to reduce costs it is critical that you remember to renew our memberships to organized dentistry. With unified voice we can accomplish more than as individuals to better our profession and educate the public and law makers of the importance of oral health.

For more information, you can contact me via email at ncarrdds@yahoo.com.

Please plan on attending our next annual meeting at FNDC, Orlando, FL, Friday June 11, 2010.

(see enclosed registration form)

Respectfully submitted

Natalie Carr

From your Legislative Advocate:

The 2010 legislative session has concluded. It was fractious session to say the least and one that was almost entirely focused on the deficit laden budget and related items, such as Medicaid reform. In the end, the legislature passed out and sent to the Governor an appropriations bill of slightly more than \$70 billion that relied on a gambling pact signed with the Seminole Tribe of Florida and federal Medicaid funds, which may or may not be forthcoming.

If additional Medicaid funds are not received, it will necessitate a special session to pass a reduced budget. There are also rumors that the Governor may veto the entire budget and call the legislature back to write a new one.

As to dental legislation, there was nothing remarkable and my biggest task was the increase of provider fees, which have not changed in nearly twenty-five years and in crafting Medicaid reform in response to the new national healthcare legislation passed by the Congress.

As they have in past years, the legislature turned a deaf ear to the increase of provider fees. The state is continuing to ask dentists to subsidize Medicaid by asking them to take Medicaid patients at an unrealistic reimbursement rate that does not cover even the costs of providing treatment to Medicaid patients.

Right after the session I received a call from a pediatric dentist who treats a number of special needs patients under the care of the state. He told me that he has notified the state that he will no longer be able to treat these patients and they will have to look elsewhere for services for these children.

Both the House and the Senate passed extensive reform bills to change Medicaid, but the two could not agree on a bill that would pass both houses. Frankly, I think that was a part of the game plan. They all knew that without raising taxes or additional revenue they could not bring meaningful reform to Medicaid. Now legislators in both houses can go home and tell their constituents in this election year that they balanced the budget without raising either taxes or fees. They can also say that they voted for and passed out to the other house meaningful Medicaid reform but the other house would not agree. Political ploys like this permeated the legislative air.

Medicaid has to be reformed. This year it accounted for 31% of the total state budget. The Medicaid census in Florida is growing rapidly with unemployment now in excess of 13% and with national reform, it is expected to add at least a million more the Florida's Medicaid rolls. Next year's budget will be even more difficult to write as the economy has not yet picked up in the state and when it does, it will be a long and slow recovery of five years or more. Also, next year, there will be no more stimulus money from Washington, which has benefited the writing of the budget for the past two years.

Meanwhile, our litigation continues in Miami and hopefully will conclude and get a favorable ruling before the end of the year. That may be the only thing to legislator's attention as to the inadequacy of provider fees.

I continue to be thankful and honored to be your legislative voice in Tallahassee and look forward to seeing you all at our annual meeting next month.

Respectfully submitted

John Grant

2011 Continuing Dental Education Courses:

March 18-19: *Pediatric Oral Surgery*, Naples, FL, sponsored by PedoGators, Inc.

April 7-10: Annual Meeting, Southeastern Society of Pediatric Dentistry, Amelia Island, FL

April 14-17: *Pediatric Conscious Sedation and ACLS Training*, Gainesville, FL, sponsored by FAPD.

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